

Sonoma County PEI Plan Community Engagement and Implementation Activities

Background

This section was written in response to concerns voiced by community members related to meaningful involvement of ethnic minority community members in the planning and implementation of the PEI plan. An essential component required by the Act is a comprehensive countywide on-going community planning and implementation process designed to involve the community in developing and maintaining PEI programs and support systems.

Sonoma County's public planning process for the Mental Health Services Act began in the fall of 2004 and has continued over the last five years. Planning for the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) builds on prior community planning processes which were utilized in Community Services and Supports (CSS) planning. The State's MHSA PEI Planning Principles (Attachment A1) provide guidance for counties to develop an informed constituency while continually reaching out to broaden diversity and expertise.

The Sonoma County PEI Planning Process followed the Required Sectors and Partner Organizations for Prevention and Early Intervention Involvement (Attachment B1). Consistent with State guidance, partnerships should extend across sectors of the community, including, but not limited to, those listed in attachment B1. Through the planning process the PEI Strategies and Programs (Attachment C1) were developed.

Implementation and Engagement Activities

These implementation and engagement activities will increase capacity for early identification of individuals (African American, Latino, Asian Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans) at risk of mental illness, by providing education about signs and symptoms of mental health issues to gatekeepers, including family members, teachers, paraprofessionals and medical providers. The project will also reduce stigma and discrimination by raising awareness about mental health issues in the community. Education programming will teach parents how to cope with mental health and/or behavioral issues that their children might be experiencing. Services will seek to identify children, youth, adults, and older adults of color who have experienced trauma or who might be at risk for suicide; at-risk children, youth and young adults, and individuals experiencing onset of serious psychiatric illness.

In addition, this project creates an opportunity to reach underserved communities, including Latino, African American, Native American, Asian Pacific Islanders and LGBTQ communities. Education about mental health issues can help reduce stigma in these populations, and education about community resources can help reduce disparities in access to mental health services. Activities will also seek to identify those in need of services who might not have been identified otherwise.

The implementation activities will continue to strengthen meaningful involvement and engagement of African Americans and other people of color in Sonoma County's Mental Health Services Act's Prevention and Early Intervention Plan. The Letter of Agreement aims to ensure that all people in Sonoma County have access to prevention and early intervention mental health services.

Community Engagement Activities and Principles

The Sonoma County Department of Health Services Mental Health Division (MHD) will direct 25% of MHSA PEI funds to the expansion of culturally appropriate preventive and early intervention mental health services for African Americans and other people of color as a Multi-Year PEI Project and Strategy.

Sonoma County MHD will work with varied and representative community-based organizations, including the Sonoma County Community Action Partnership and the NAACP, to create a community-based committee comprised of African Americans and other people of color to evaluate and to make recommendations on ALL RFPs arising from the MHSA PEI Planning process. MHD will seek and accept committee member nominations from several groups, including the Sonoma County NAACP. The products of the RFP Evaluation Committee will be reported to the Mental Health Director, the Director of Health Services, and the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. MHD staff will provide support to the committee and use Attachment D1 as the PEI RFP Scoring Worksheet. This committee will also ensure the meaningful participation and engagement of African Americans and other people of color in future MHSA activities. The committee will be comprised of diverse and relevant representation.

The Mental Health Division will work to ensure that African Americans and other people of color are actively part of the RFP process. To ensure that people of color and groups serving people of color will have an opportunity to obtain grants through the REP process, the MHD will assure that technical assistance for the REP process is available to groups that require it.

This will allow for both content expertise and full participation of community stakeholders, including the extensive and diverse Sonoma County provider community, without concern for conflict of interest. Membership will follow PEI guidelines as required by the MHOAC.

Early in the PEI planning process the Steering Committee established a set of criteria to evaluate the RFPs. The Committee considered the seven key criteria defined in the PEI guidelines and adapted those criteria to local considerations to ensure each criterion could be consistently applied.

The Department of Health Services remains committed to diversity of our staff, including managerial positions, and will strive to maintain a workforce that is reflective of current and future demographics of the community.

The Sonoma County Community Action Partnership (CAPS) will also provide technical assistance to the County in the process of countywide information-gathering regarding needs among the low-income community, with particular emphasis on inclusion of a range of ethnic minorities in a way that promotes a fuller understanding of how delivery of mental health prevention and early intervention improves the lives of County residents. The purpose of the technical assistance contract would be for CAPS to develop and lead a number of activities to provide meaningful input from the Latino, African American, Asian Pacific Islander, and Native American community in Sonoma County to discuss and identify strategies to improve access and engagement.

Specific activities anticipated during the planning phase of the technical assistance, pending discussions and clarification with Sonoma County Mental Health:

- 1) Meeting to discuss needs, concerns, and expectations of the project with MH Division staff
- 2) Assign project leader; use of agency staff as needed for targeting or reaching out to various at-risk populations for the planning process
- 3) Review of past work within the County related to the Mental Health Services Act implementation
- 4) Coordinate with current County Mental Health staff and the RFP committee and the Latino Outreach and Engagement committee
- 5) Conduct a generalized needs assessment of Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County's adult program participants, to determine their views on the range of assets and needs for the low-income population; record and process information
- 6) Conduct countywide discussions with parents enrolled in Head Start sites, with low-income or special needs children; record and process information
- 7) Literature review specific to needs of ethnic minorities vis-à-vis mental health services; references to be noted in report.
- 8) Integrate feedback from students, parents, and staff at Elsie Allen and Piner High Schools on the prevention and early intervention needs of high school-age youth.
- 9) Outreach to minority communities through the faith-based community; interview of key informants
 - a. Develop of tool to get information within the target community, following input from key informant (e.g. focus group, opinion meter, written survey, etc)
 - b. Incorporation of the information for use in the County planning documents
- 10) Outreach to key youth providers countywide for information regarding their impressions and understanding of key needs
- 11) Outreach to Community Health Centers across Sonoma County , review the racial profile of their patient base, and conduct key provider interviews; information to be included in final report
- 12) Participation in planning meetings with the County
- 13) Participation in development of final report and findings